



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ST. CHARLES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFERS
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT, PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM**

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – Breastfeeding provides the best source of nutrition and the ideal balance of nutrients to boost child development through the first six months of life, according to [the American Academy of Pediatrics](#). To support the developmental, economic and long-term benefits of breastfeeding, the St. Charles County Department of Public Health offers a Peer Counseling and Support Program that is led by nutritionist and breastfeeding coordinator Megan Hickey, who is an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant.

“Most expectant mothers start out breastfeeding exclusively when their baby is born,” says Hickey. “However, the proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed through the recommended first six months of life drops significantly when they do not get the physical and emotional assistance they need. Our counseling program is designed to provide that support mothers seek to successfully achieve their goals. We dispel myths and make certain moms get accurate information on the process.”

How Does the Peer Counseling and Support Program Help?

Peer counselors lead a weekly Measurement Mondays support group that is free to all members of the community. Open from 10 a.m. to noon every Monday (except County-observed holidays) at the Department of Public Health office, located at 1650 Boone’s Lick Road in St. Charles, Measurement Mondays offer opportunities for moms to regularly measure their baby’s growth, network with other breastfeeding mothers in the community and learn more about breastfeeding and child development. For information on the Measurement Mondays program or to register, please call 636-949-7402.

Why Is Breastfeeding Beneficial?

Breast milk provides [the essential nutrients a baby needs](#). At birth, a thick milk called colostrum is rich with protective nutrients and antibodies. In the days and weeks after birth, the colostrum changes into “mature milk” that contains fats, sugars, protein, vitamins and other beneficial material that enhance proper development and boost the immune system. Many studies show that breastfed babies get sick less often than bottle-fed babies and have fewer upset stomachs, allergies, and weight problems as infants. Additionally, breastfeeding strengthens the bond between mother and child and keeps moms healthy by reducing risks for some cancers and improving bone density.

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Along with the physical benefits, breastfeeding generates economic benefits through reduced costs and improved productivity. A study by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reported that the United States economy could save at least \$13 billion if 90 percent of all mothers breastfed for the first six months of their child's life. Another study by Mutual of Omaha showed that health care costs for those who participated in a lactation program were three times lower than those who did not. It is estimated that individual families can save more than \$1,000 per year by choosing breastfeeding over formula. Lastly, a company-wide breastfeeding support program benefits to employers; mothers return to work more quickly after childbirth, fewer hours of lost work are reported due to sick children and significantly lower short- and long-term healthcare expenses are incurred.

For additional information on breastfeeding, please visit the [Department of Public Health, the Office on Women's Health](#), and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) websites or contact St. Charles County Breastfeeding Coordinator Megan Hickey at 636-949-7402.

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About the St. Charles County Division of Health Services

The Division of Health Services' mission is to promote healthy choices and improve the health of the community. To achieve these goals, program services include an Immunization Clinic for children and adults; nutrition education and supplemental food services for women, infants and children; chronic disease screening and prevention; Communicable Disease reporting and investigation; educational programming; the collection and distribution of birth and death certificates; assistance in applications for U.S. passports; and more. For information on programs offered, visit sccmo.org/HealthServices or call 636-949-7400.

About St. Charles County

Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state's third largest county in both population and economic share. It is home to 15 scenic county parks, encompassing more than 3,643 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With a population of 395,504, St. Charles County is home to large employers including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County employs more than 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit sccmo.org.